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SUBJECT: RLA'S ARRIVAL HIGHLIGHTS INTEREST IN FIGHT AGAINST CRIME AND CORRUPTION

**¶11. (U)** Summary: A full week of press coverage dedicated the initial visit of the Embassy's new Regional Legal Adviser (RLA) to Montenegro, even in a slow news month, illustrates the importance Montenegrins place on the country's struggle with corruption, an issue that ranks at the top of all public opinion polls. The media, opposition politicians, and government officials all used the opportunity to speak out on the issue. All spun the news of the RLA's arrival to best fit their own message, but the overall implication was that the challenge of curbing organized crime and corruption is a significant and complex issue for Montenegro. End summary.

Widespread Press Coverage

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**¶12. (U)** On August 13, all daily newspapers in Montenegro announced that the U. S. Department of Justice, Criminal Division, had selected Mr. Haub for the position of Resident Legal Advisor (RLA) for Montenegro, a position which will coordinate U.S. Government assistance connected with promoting the rule of law in Montenegro. Under the headlines "Haub is going after mafia," "Haub chasing criminals," the press reported that Haub will work in partnership with Montenegrin judges, prosecutors, and police to enhance their ability to prosecute and adjudicate cases involving corruption, organized crime, and war crimes.

**¶13. (U)** On August 14, press and TV stations continued to report on the RLA's activities, noting that the RLA met with Deputy Prime Minister Gordana Djurovic, Supreme Court President Vesna Medenica, Chief State Prosecutor Ranka Carapic, and Minister of Justice Miras Radovic. The GoM's press center released a statement about the RLA's meeting with DPM Djurovic, and the resulting press headlines included, "Haub is chasing big fish," and "Stronger against crime." Haub told Public Radio and Television of Montenegro (RTCG) that there is an increase of professionalism and efficiency in the Montenegrin judiciary and that he is looking forward to working with prosecutors, judges, and police to further develop Montenegro's system of justice. Speaking about the chief challenges in the struggle against corruption, Djurovic emphasized the importance of adopting the (law on the) criminal procedure code and creating pre-conditions for its full implementation, especially strengthening the state prosecutor's capacities, and adopting the law on the prevention of conflict of interest in performing public functions. President of the Supreme Court Vesna Medenica told the local press that she expects a lot of help from the RLA, saying that the Montenegrin judiciary had a positive experience working with the legal consultant at the U.S. Embassy in Belgrade. She expects that the RLA will assist with organizing trainings for

addressing computer and financial crimes, improving the special department for organized crime and corruption, and improving technology used in war crimes trials.

Opposition Claim RLA Arrival as Evidence that GoM is Corrupt

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14. (U) For the third straight day on August 15, local press again carried headlines resulting from the RLA's arrival and publicized meetings. Representatives from most opposition parties in Montenegro reacted to the RLA's arrival to Montenegro, saying that his presence indicates a high level of corruption in Montenegro. They also said they hope the RLA arrival will shake up criminal circles in Montenegro.

15. (SBU) Movement for Change (PZP) MP Branka Bosnjak told press that simply the fact that the U.S. is offering assistance to Montenegro for its fight against organized crime and corruption demonstrates how alarming the situation in Montenegro is. Socialist People's Party MP Vuksan Simonovic warned that Montenegro's judicial system does not allow for any interference from the international community in the jurisdiction of Montenegro's state institutions. He welcomed, however, all exchanges of experience and knowledge. Serb People's Party (SNS) member Jovan Vucurovic said that he expects that the U.S.

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prosecutor will remain objective despite possible temptations that Montenegrin authorities might create. Vucurovic indicated that the GoM could try to bribe or otherwise entice the RLA to simply take the government at its word or look the other way, and noted his hope that Haub would not fall victim to the GoM's machinations.

16. (SBU) The President of the Senate of the Association of Lawyers of Montenegro Stanko Maric also warned the RLA about taking the GoM at their word. Maric referred to the RLA's remarks about the country's progress in its struggle against crime and corruption as groundless, asking publicly to see the documents on which he based his conclusion. Maric noted that European Commission's assessments (which were fairly harsh), based on research conducted on the ground, are totally different. Maric said he does not see any reason for the RLA's arrival if he is going to immediately conclude that significant progress has already been made in the struggle against crime and corruption. Maric, also, said that if the RLA is making conclusions only on the basis of what he is told by the Montenegrin officials, his next assessment could be even better as in his opinion, the GoM will naturally continue to present a rosy picture.

Comment

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17. (SBU) Despite the traditional lack of press topics in August, the extensive coverage of the RLA's arrival indicates what a significant issue crime and corruption are for Montenegrins, and just how politically sensitive Mr. Haub's work here will be. For the opposition it has provided an opportunity to criticize the GoM for inaction on the issue, which plays well with the public. Citizens typically put corruption on the top of their list of

complaints about their country's governance. The EU's last report was fairly scathing with regard to GoM efforts to curb corruption, so the RLA's arrival serves as a reminder to the public that the international community, including the United States, see organized crime and corruption as a challenge to Montenegro's further development.

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